

Janet T. Mills  
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.  
Commissioner



Maine Department of Health and Human Services  
Office of Behavioral Health  
11 State House Station  
41 Anthony Avenue  
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011  
Tel: (207) 287-2595; Fax: (207) 287-9152  
TTY: Dial 711 (Maine Relay)

April 6, 2021

Senator Ned Claxton, Chair  
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair  
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 964 – An Act To Expand Access to Certified Substance Use Disorder Recovery Residence Services

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

This letter is to provide information regarding LD 964, which would require recovery residences to be certified according to nationally recognized standards in order to receive contracts from the Department or receive housing vouchers or municipal General Assistance (GA) from a person living in a recovery residence.

Currently, rules are in development establishing certification criteria based on national standards for voluntary certification of recovery residences, pursuant to P.L. 2019 Ch. 524. At present, the Department contracts with the Maine State Housing Authority (MSHA) to provide operating subsidies to certified recovery residences. The contract with MSHA specifies that only recovery residences are certified by the Maine Association of Recovery Residences (MARR) are eligible for funding. The Department also contracts with MARR to certify recovery residences based on National Association of Recovery Residences (NARR) standards.


There are currently 51 MARR certified recovery residences in Maine and 70 uncertified recovery residences. The Department's MSHA contract currently funds 16 certified recovery residences -with 1 more in process – totaling approximately \$850,000 per year. This bill could increase the number of recovery residences who volunteer for certification, which would necessitate the Department increasing funding to MARR in order to manage the increased demand for certification in a timely fashion.

Historically, vouchers have generally not been permitted for use in recovery residences for reasons that include but are not limited to: housing regulations do not always align with what is practiced in a recovery residence setting; recovery residence units may not meet inspection requirements such as locks and single room occupancy requirements; room sharing presents challenges around income and rent calculations; and concerns regarding state and federal program funds being combined.

With respect to General Assistance, GA administrators in municipalities have been asked to request documentation from property managers that the recovery residence is a non-profit residence. Landlords have been asked to become certified as recovery residences<sup>1</sup>, but DHHS has no legal authority to require certification. To the Department's knowledge, no one has been denied general assistance solely because they live in a recovery residence.

We wanted the Committee to be aware of the above information as it considers this bill moving forward. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

  
Jessica Monahan Pollard, PhD, Director  
Office of Behavioral Health

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/GA%20Recovery%20Residence%20Guidance.pdf>